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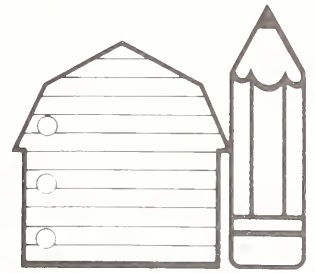
Ag in the Classroom



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Notes

United States
Department of
Agriculture



A bi-monthly newsletter for the Agriculture in the Classroom program. Sponsored by the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture to help students understand the important role of agriculture in the United States economy. For information, contact: Shirley Traxler, Director, Room 317-A, Administration Bldg., USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250-2200. 202/447-5727

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Vol. 6, No. 2

South Carolina AITC Kicks Off With Teacher Workshops

This summer, South Carolina's AITC will kick off activities with a series of teacher workshops. The four workshops, which are the first major undertaking of the AITC program in the state, will show teachers in grades K-5 how to integrate agriculture into the existing curricula in science, mathematics, geography, social studies, history and language arts.

Participants in the workshops will receive teaching materials and a list of resources for teaching about agriculture. Participants will also receive fact sheets, video filmstrips, and activity sheets they can use with students in their classrooms. The goal of the workshops, says Lynne Hufziger, career guidance specialist for

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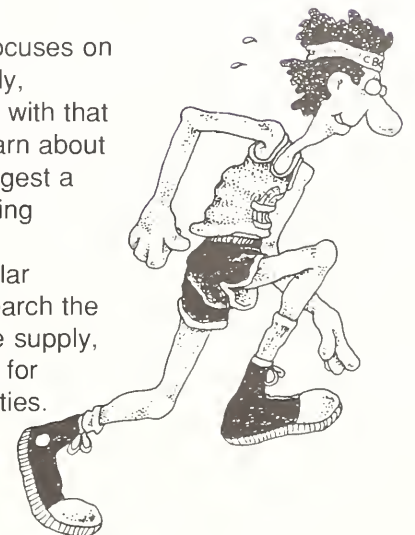
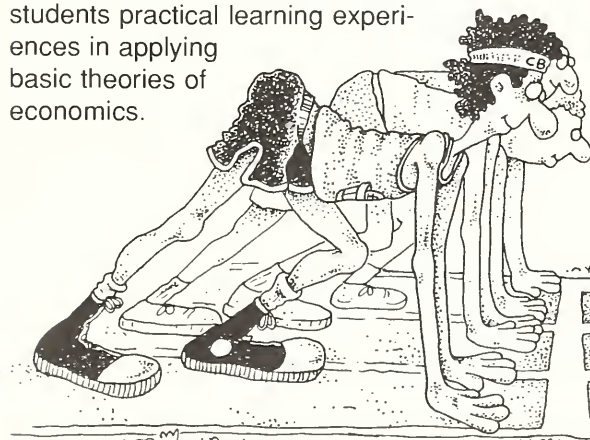
New Economics Package Offers Real-World Experience

Going long. Settlement price. Close a position. Those are just some of the important economics concepts high school students are learning as they use a new economics curriculum kit developed by the Chicago Board of Trade. The materials, called *The Commodity Challenge*, use the futures market as a learning tool to give students practical learning experiences in applying basic theories of economics.

"More people are affected in their daily life by the futures market than the stock market. Yet few people—of any age—know anything about the futures market," says Bonnie Culp of the Chicago Board of Trade.

The Commodity Challenge first focuses on three key economics concepts: supply, demand, and price discovery. Armed with that knowledge, students then begin to learn about the futures market. The materials suggest a number of independent activities. Using commodity information published in newspapers, they may track a particular commodity over time. They also research the factors that influence supply, demand, and price for various commodities.

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From the Director

Dear Readers,

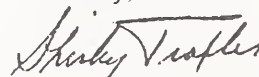
This week the National Governors' Association and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency sponsored a Youth Environmental Action Forum in Washington, D.C. Attending were two students and an environmental/science teacher or administrator from each state.

The objectives of the forum were to provide participants with increased awareness of domestic and global issues, to identify strategies for youth involvement in community environmental projects back home, and to provide a forum for discussion of future state and national environmental education programs.

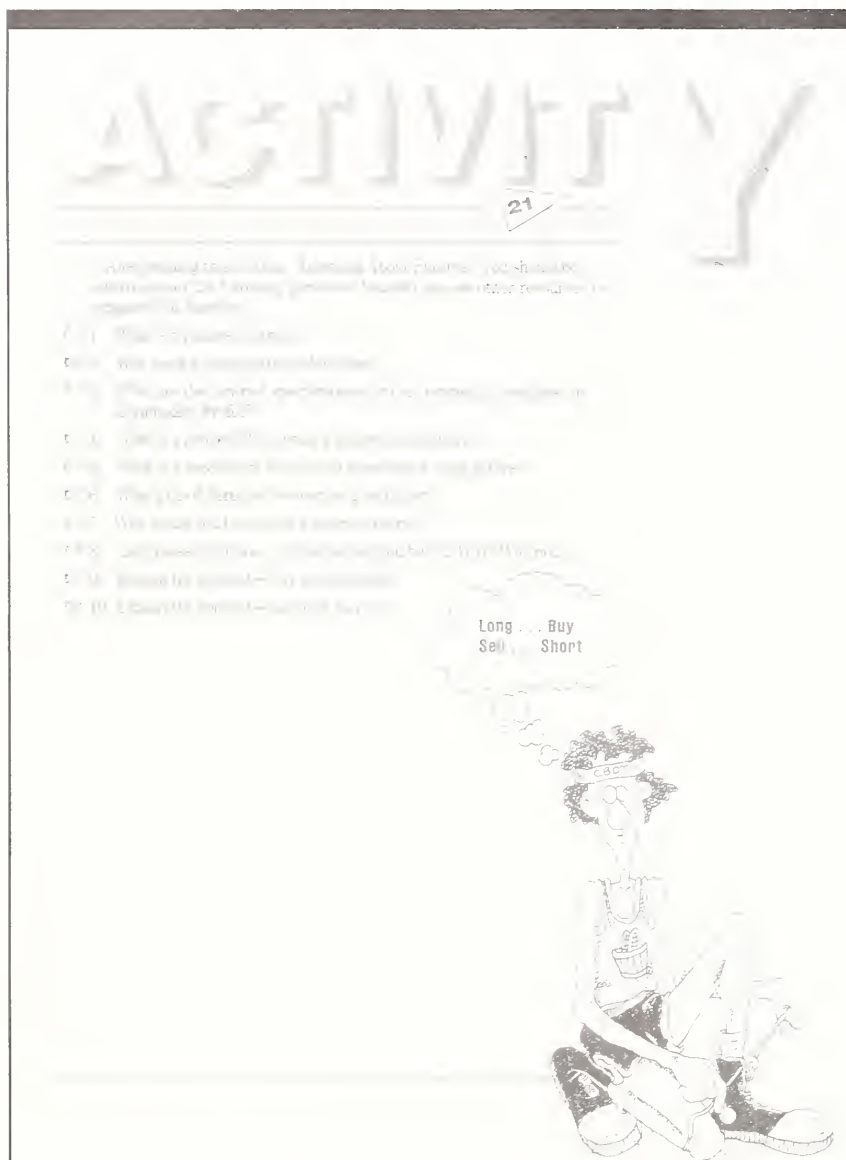
On the agenda for the teachers/administrators was a visit to the Department of Agriculture where they had a chance to inspect the educational materials from the various USDA agencies.

I was gratified to learn that many of them are familiar with *Ag in the Classroom* and some are involved in your state programs. They understand and appreciate the close ties between agriculture and the environment.

Yours truly,



Shirley Traxler



Economics Package

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"We're lucky to be able to use our market as an example of supply and demand at work," says Culp.

Teacher training is an integral part of the *Commodity Challenge*. A teacher's guide that accompanies the student materials includes a number of suggestions of additional class activities for follow-up. Teacher inservice sessions are also available. "We've found that in general, the teachers need to learn as much as the students do," Culp said.

The *Commodity Challenge* can be used in social studies, consumer economics, business math, and economics classes. The flexible program can be used as

- an independent study project
- a class assignment
- a new school club
- part of an existing school club (4-H, FFA)
- an activity supplement to an economics textbook.

To be part of the *Commodity Challenge* program, teachers must register each student. A fee of \$1 per student covers the cost of materials and shipping.

For more information, contact Richard Jelinek at the Chicago Board of Trade, 312/435-7206.

Spotlight

Maine Teacher Stresses Agriculture's Past—and Future

"I firmly believe that agriculture is part of our heritage ... and part of our future," says Maine teacher Bonnie Wetmore. Since attending a Maine Ag in the Classroom summer teacher workshop, Wetmore has put her philosophy into practice. Today, her students find agriculture incorporated into subjects ranging from language arts to science, from the first time the bell rings until school's out.

Wetmore teaches third graders at Crooked River Elementary School in Casco, Maine. She says that most of her students have never had any first-hand experience with farming. "So it's essential that students learn about agriculture in school."

Wetmore uses Ag in the Classroom activities to help students think and reason. Often she asks questions that have many right answers. She started a lesson on map-reading by asking, "What needs to be near a farm?" Based on the answers they had developed, students then looked at maps to determine the best locations for farms.

When students were learning about apples, they found apple activities incorporated into language arts (reading about Johnny Appleseed), math, and science. Wetmore brought in nine different kinds of apples. Students graphed the number of seeds in each, and then made a chart that reflected other information about the apple (was it sweet or sour? green, yellow, or red?)

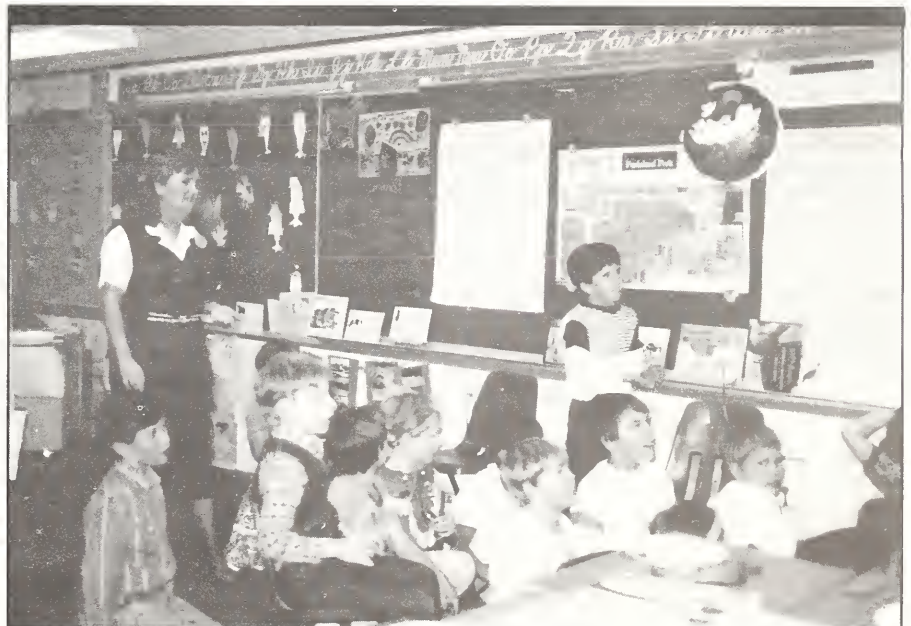
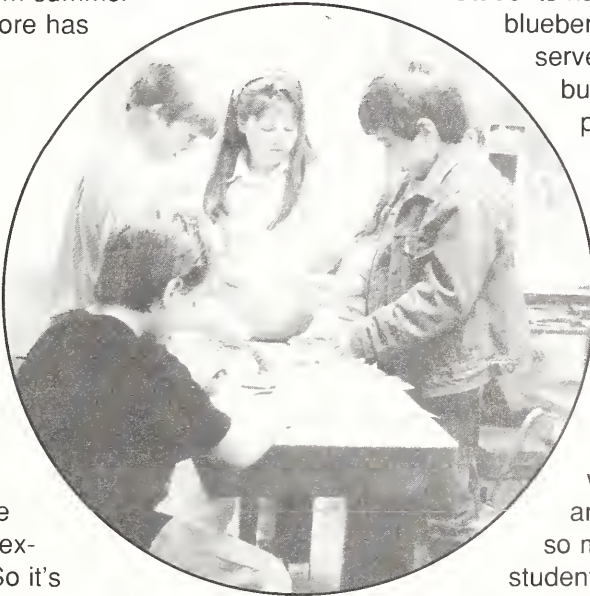
Wetmore makes sure that students have fun while they're learning. One example is her collection of student-written "Pigericks"—jokes and riddles involving pigs. Example: What's a pig's favorite game? Pig-Pong.

Parents, too, are involved with their children's learning. At the end of the year, she and her students sponsored a harvest festival.

Students had baked apple and blueberry muffins (which they served with homemade butter). They had also prepared applesauce and potato chips to serve their parents. While everyone munched, students shared what they had learned during the year.

During the summer, Wetmore plans to return to Maine's summer teacher workshop—this time as an adviser. "I've learned so much myself, and my students have gained in so many ways, that I want to share the experience with a new group of teachers," she says.

Students in Bonnie Wetmore's third grade study agriculture all year long.



Delaware: New Materials Incorporate the Best

Anyone who's ever been stuck with a bad bargain has probably been told they bought "a pig in a poke." But where does the expression come from?

Students in Delaware English classes can learn that the saying originated at country fairs in England. A cheat would put a cat in a cloth bag, called a 'poke,' and hoodwink some unsuspecting buyer into thinking there was a fine pig in the poke. The customer would pay the money, the seller would vanish, and when the poke was opened, the customer would find nothing but a cat.

Information on how figurative language often reflects our agricultural heritage is just one of dozens of teaching activities collected in a new notebook of curriculum materials published by Delaware Ag in the Classroom. Designed for elementary grades, the materials offer suggestions for incorporating agriculture into English, social studies, art, math, and science.

Many of the materials in the Delaware notebook have been collected from other AITC programs around the country. Both the North Dakota and Nebraska AITC programs are

Delaware Agriculture in the Classroom

credited with developing some of the activities in the notebook.

Each activity begins with a cover sheet that helps teachers see at a glance:

- the subject area for which the activity is designed
- student learning objectives
- suggested grade level

- source of the activity
- contacts for further information
- background information for the teacher.

Each activity package includes step-by-step instructions that begin with the materials needed and conclude with suggestions for follow-up activities. The directions offer the kind of practical advice teachers appreciate. For example, one set of directions includes the following comment, "I found that using a scissors is a pain because the toothpicks tend to split while cutting. Instead, I used a paring knife."

Language arts teachers who use the materials will also learn that to avoid buying a pig in a poke, smart buyers would insist on opening the bag first. The result? The cat was let out of the bag.

South Carolina

Continued from page 1

the South Carolina State Department of Education and state contact for South Carolina AITC, is to "help teachers bring familiar and not-so-familiar agricultural principles and applications into the other curricular areas.

"We have surveyed fifth graders in the state to determine what they know—and don't know—about agriculture," says Hufziger. "Their responses will form the basis of what we teach at the workshops."

South Carolina's program is offered through Clemson University in cooperation with the South Carolina Farm Bureau, the South Carolina Department of Education, and the South Carolina Department of Agriculture. Glenn Shinn, head of agriculture education at Clemson University, Emory Bishop of the South Carolina Farm Bureau, and Peggy Cain, science consultant for the State Department of Agriculture, have worked closely with Hufziger in developing the AITC program and in planning the teacher workshops.

Alabama Workshop Focuses on the Young Child

Young children need more than paper-and-pencil activities to learn effectively. Ag in the Classroom activities, which build on children's natural curiosity about the world around them, are ideal for early childhood education. That was the message at a workshop sponsored by Alabama Ag in the Classroom held during the annual conference of the Alabama Association for the Education of Young Children.

"So often, we have taken practices from high school or junior high and superimposed them on young children," says Jacqueline Autrey, early childhood specialist with the Alabama State Department of Education and co-author of *Alabama Treasures*, a developmentally appropriate curriculum guide for students in grades K-3. "But the Ag in the Classroom activities are right in line with what is recommended for students in this age group. They're hands-on activities that allow students to explore and experience for themselves."

Autrey points out that most primary grades already include a unit about farms. "We aren't asking teachers to do anything new. But the Ag in the Classroom activities add a richness and a depth to the curriculum," she says.

Presenting the workshop with Autrey was Rosemary Mobley, the co-author of *Alabama Treasures*. They showed teachers how the activities presented in *Alabama Treasures* meet the new national guidelines for developmentally appropriate practices



recently issued by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. "These new guidelines have had a dramatic effect on the way teachers think about teaching students in the early grades," Autrey says. "They are constantly looking for new curricular practices that do a better job of meeting the needs of young children."

Alabama Treasures is designed to be a flexible resource unit. "Teachers can use all of

it—or any part they choose," she says. In her visits to classrooms around the state, Autrey has found that teachers have used the curriculum ideas "as a springboard. It has really fostered teachers' creativity."

"The true test of any curriculum materials," Autrey notes, "is whether teachers actually *use* them." That's a test that *Alabama Treasures* has passed ... with flying colors.

Left: Young children have fun while learning in an activity from the *Alabama Treasures* curriculum



Colorado Students Rise to the Occasion

A program that combined bread baking, lessons on agriculture, and a good healthy dose of self-esteem helped more than 175 low-income Denver youngsters rise to the occasion. The five-week workshop, titled "Building a More Positive You," combined developing self-worth with studying the connection between Colorado agriculture and Denver living.

Behind the enthusiastic youngsters, the tubs of flour, and the bubbly yeast was Karen Williams, a Colorado State University Cooperative Extension agent with the 4-H program in Denver County. Williams designed a program to help city youngsters gain a

renewed sense of self-worth, while also learning about the farm-city connection.

Materials for the workshops included the *Colorado Reader*, an eight-page newspaper developed by the Colorado AITC program. Helen Davis, state AITC contact, said, "We were delighted to see our materials integrated into this program. Having students learn about Colorado agriculture was a unique and creative aspect of this program."



A Denver youngster mixes bread-in-a-bag at Curtis Park Community Center. The bread-baking lesson, dubbed Rise to the Occasion, was organized by Karen Williams, Colorado State University Cooperative Extension agent, 4-H, to teach urban children the farm-city connection, as well as to help them develop self-esteem.

How do you instruct a room full of kids—37 at one location—in the art of baking bread? "First," said Williams, "you get organized." This means presenting large how-to illustrations before the first cup of flour is dipped and measured. It means lugging in plastic tubs of ingredients and enough measuring cups and spoons to equip each participant. It also means organizing participants into small groups so everyone can have enough space to work during the assigned times.

Each child received a plastic bag. One by one, they stepped forward, first to measure yeast, sugar, salt, powdered milk, and water into the bag. While the mixture fermented, the children got a lesson in growing wheat.

Wheat seeds, wheat plants, and a colorful illustration of a wheat head that contained many kernels of wheat all helped students learn exactly how the wheat had moved from the farmer's wheat field to their grocery store. "Students were fascinated to see the wheat plant," said Linda Rinelli, Cooperative Extension Education Specialist for the Denver Urban Garden Program. "They had little or no idea what growing wheat looks like."

Rinelli explored agriculture in other sessions, including an urban gardening workshop called Grow Your Own Crops. "Because the students represented so many ethnic backgrounds, I paid special attention to how Colorado farmers grow the foods that are part of their heritage. American Indian children learned where Anasazi beans are grown. Hispanic children saw that Colorado farmers also produce the beans *they* are familiar with. And African American kids learned that they could even plant collard greens themselves."

The program was designed for low-income city youngsters. Funded by a grant from the Arco Foundation, the sessions were held at community centers, a recreation center, and a school.

The program was so successful last summer that it will be repeated this year. Mary Hartman, Jefferson County Extension Office, says she was particularly impressed by the "I Can Do" attitude the program helped develop in young people. "The fact that these youngsters could take home a loaf of homemade bread—and possibly even teach their *mothers* a new skill—was instrumental in helping raise their self-esteem."

New USDA Video Emphasizes Agriculture's Importance

A new USDA video, "America's Most Crucial Industry," details agriculture's contributions to the United States. The 15-minute TV production helps viewers of all ages understand agriculture's vital role in the American economy.

"Agriculture has provided the foundation for the development of commerce in the United States," said Paul E. Kindinger, USDA's director of public affairs. "It is immense, complex and an integral part of every local economy in this country. The success of our economy depends, in large part, on how well our agricultural system performs."

The video helps viewers realize a surprising fact: although the number of farmers has declined, the number of people who derive their income from agriculture and related industries has increased. As a result, agriculture today employs more workers than any manufacturing industry.

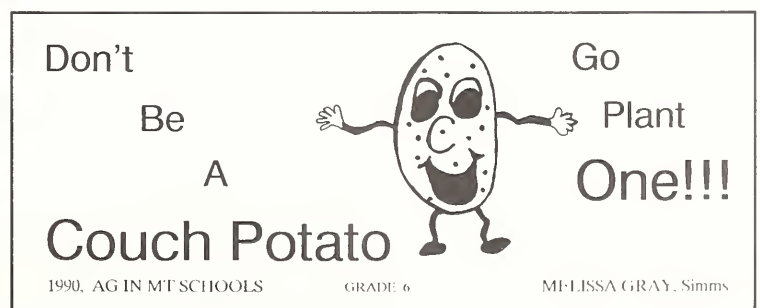
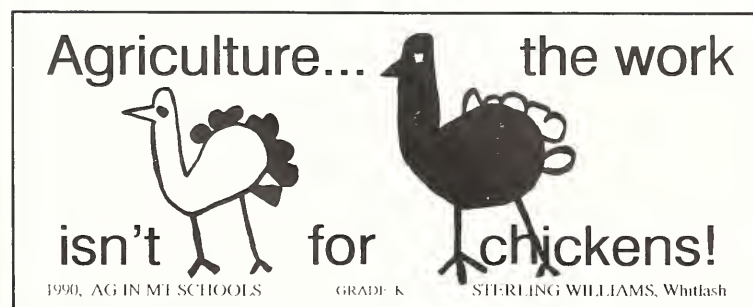
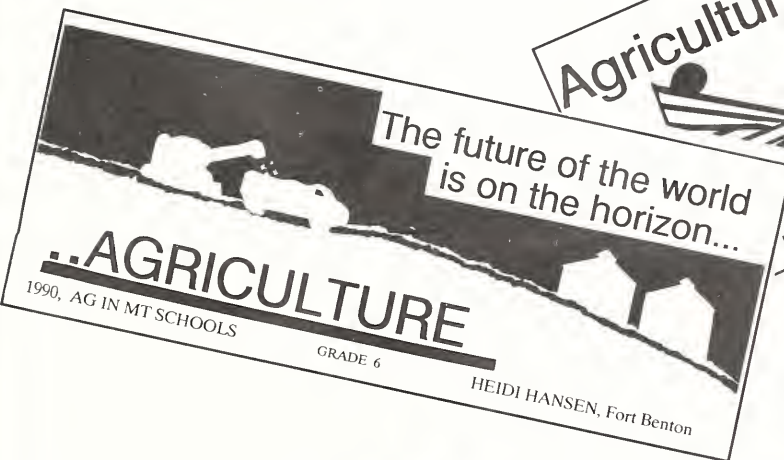
Kindinger noted that the video would be an excellent educational tool. It could also be used as an introduction to teacher workshops or as part of a public information campaign.

Copies of "America's Most Crucial Industry" are available on 1/2 inch VHS tape and can be purchased for \$12.00 from:



Video Transfer
4709-B Arundel Avenue
Rockville, MD 20852.

A new USDA video details agriculture's importance to the US economy.



Montana students again were invited to take part in an "Ag Out of the Classroom" activity. Students from across the state designed bumper stickers that educate Montanans about the importance of agriculture in their state. More than 16,000 of the bumper stickers will be distributed statewide by Agriculture in Montana Schools.

The individuals listed here are key reference persons in each state. If you have any questions, want to make reports, or need more information about your state's Ag in the Classroom program, contact the following:

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